

A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
NECESSITY
OF

Revelation , and an Holy Life.

Deliver'd in a

Visitation-Sermon,

AT

GUILFORD,

October. 7. 1697.

By *WILLIAM WHITEFELD*,
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *E. Holt*, for *Tho. Bennet*, at the *Half-Moon* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, 1698.

DISCOURSE

NECESSITY

OF

DELIVERED IN

Edinburgh

AT

GUILDFORD

October 7. 1807.

BY WILLIAM WHITEHEAD

Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

LONDON

Printed by W. B. for the Bookseller at the West
St Paul's Church-yard, 1808.

SERMON.

PSAL. L. 23.

--- To him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I
show the Salvation of God.

Several Verses of this Psalm, and likewise this of my
 Text, seem to be spoken by the Author in the Per-
 son of God; being order'd in with this solemn Pre-
 face to command our Attention, *The Mighty God,*
even the Lord hath spoken; and my Text is introduc'd with
 this, *Thou shalt God.*

The Psalm it self treats of calling all Mankind to Judg-
 ment, and of rejecting the Jewish Sacrifices: From whence
 (as *Cajetan* observes) it is evident that the Time of Christ's
 Coming is here describ'd, and that it is the Messiah who
 is this mighty Lord, brought in as an Interlocutor with
 the Prophet: He, who calls the *Earth from the rising of*
the Sun to the going down thereof, sending his Summons
 forth, far beyond the Jewish Nation and *Mosaical Law.*
 All which seems peculiar to the Promulgation of the
 Gospel, which was to take in all the *Heathen for the In-*

heritance of Christ, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession.

Now, if from the Person chiefly concern'd in the Subject of this Psalm, we are to learn what is meant by the Salvation of God mention'd in my Text, it is to be understood of that Redemption, which was extended to all Mankind by Jesus Christ: If from the Person that speaks in my Text, we may know who is to give us the knowledge of this Salvation, it is God himself who hath promised to do it: And lastly, if the ordering our Conversation aright, be propos'd as a Condition necessary for this Salvation being shew'd unto us, we may be assur'd that the Foundation of the Knowledge is to be laid in a Vertuous and Holy Life: Which are the several Parts that I intend to speak to in my following Discourse, by shewing,

I. That it is most worthy of the Salvation of God, that it be understood of the General Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ.

II. That the Knowledge of this Salvation is above the reach of Natural Reason, and not to be attain'd but by Revelation from God.

III. That it is an Holy Life, which will render us the most capable of receiving this Knowledge from God.

I. It is most worthy of the Salvation of God, that it be understood of the General Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ.

Both in the Old and New Testament (as the Seventh Article saith) Everlasting Life is offer'd to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man. And there is none other Name under Heaven given among

Men.

Men whereby we may be saved, neither is there Salvation in any other. Nevertheless, before the *Fulness of Time* was come, wherein God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the Law, this Knowledge was confin'd to very narrow limits, to a Nation exceedingly small in proportion to the Inhabitants of all the Earth, and very inconsiderable likewise in respect of the large Empires of the World, which extended their Dominions wide, together with the knowledge of many useful Sciences, by which they civilized a great part of Mankind.

The Revelation besides was dark, even where it was best known; particularly as to the Resurrection of the Dead, which is the Anchor of our Hope after this Life, (the glad Tidings of Reward to the Good and the Terror and Punishment of the Wicked,) as also by reason of the ambiguity of the Law under Types and Shadows of things to come; which represented a Salvation to be given many Ages after by this general Redeemer, who was not commonly believ'd in by the Jews before his Coming, nor known by them when he appear'd.

Such was the Knowledge of the Salvation of God (narrow and obscure) before the Coming of Christ; which now is reach'd out unto all Mankind by our Messiah, who is set for a Light to the Gentiles, and for Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth. Now is this Salvation perfected in Jesus Christ, in whom God hath reconcil'd the World unto himself. And now is the Knowledge of it clearly manifested, since the Day-spring from on high hath visit'd the World, to give Light to them that sat in Darkness, and Knowledge of Salvation unto his People.

Let this suffice to shew in short, that it is most worthy of the Salvation of God to be understood of this General Redemption, which is extended and manifested to all the Race of Mankind in Jesus Christ; for Salvation was not to be had in any other, but in Him it was compleated, and perfectly known at his Coming. And this, we may presume,

sume, is that Salvation promis'd in my Text, to be shewn unto us by God, if we shall order our Conversation aright; in which we may assure our selves, that without an Holy Life we are not fit to be instructed by God; and that without Instruction from God, we are not able to attain the knowledge of his Salvation. For,

II. The Knowledge of this Salvation is above the reach of Natural Reason, and not to be attain'd but by Revelation from God.

I will not dispute how far our Natural Reason, unassisted by Revelation, can lead us on in our way to the knowledge of God's true Worship, and to the attainment of eternal Happiness; but shall take it for granted, that our Faith in Christ Jesus is now become requisite to Salvation; and that in all its necessary Doctrines it was not fully known; either to the wisest of the Heathens, or to the best of the Jews, before it was revealed by God.

And our Natural Reason is the same now as heretofore, and can shew us nothing new in this Disquisition, but as it shall please God to declare his Will concerning it. So that, if any things shall remain still unreveal'd by God, or made known by him but in part, tho' a *Socrates*, a *Plato*, or an *Aristotle* should at this day set themselves to enquire into them, their Natural Knowledge could carry them no farther now than it hath done of old; nor even *Abraham's* Faith him, without a more exprefs Revelation from God.

Now of this Nature I take to be that *hidden Wisdom* of Almighty God, by which he hath ordained the great Work of our Redemption; several Articles whereof (warranted by the Apostles of Christ) we call the Mysteries of the Christian Faith. Concerning which *St. Paul* (the most Learned Apostle, inspired by God in a most eminent manner, and rapt up into the third Heavens) doth complain, that in this Life *We know but in part, we speak and understand*
stand

stand in Children: We see (God and Divine Mysteries) thro' a Glass, darkly: We know but in part; because God hath reveal'd them only in part, only in general; that there have bin such Wonders wrought for our Redemption (which therefore we do believe) without declaring any thing of his hidden Wisdom in their wonderful Production; which therefore when we speak of, we speak and understand as Children.

Indeed, our knowledge in these things is much enlarg'd by the Revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *who hath brought Life and Immortality to light*; but yet there are still remaining many Mysteries in the Work of our Redemption; far above the reach and capacity of our Natural Reason to comprehend; which in this Life, we must content our selves to view only in a Glass, darkly, and not expect to behold them now, as we shall hereafter, Face to Face, and to see as we shall be seen. And it is the high Privilege of the Gospel, that we may behold these Wonders of the Lord in the Glass, which the Law (as the Apostle saith) look'd upon thro' a Veil: but it is our advantage to see those Promises of God fulfilled, which our Forefathers beheld at a great distance from their Completion; and by the Light of Prophecy only (which shone in a dark place) or else thro' Types and Figures.

But since it pleased God to require something in Proof of Abraham's Faith, that (hoping even against Hope, and not depending on the Promise of God thro' unbelief) He enjoy'd to see the day of the Lord; and He saw it (even thro' this thick and gloomy Veil) and was glad; much more reasonably may God expect from us, that we should now be fully persuaded, that what He hath promised, He hath been able also to perform; since it is given to us to see the performances of our God; to adore his Goodness in the fulfilling all his Promises, and in the completion of his Predictions, and to read the Mysteries of our Redemption in the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

And

(And this Information not coming otherwise into us, but from the Reveal'd Word of God, gives us a sure Ground for our Belief (and for our Knowledge likewise) in these Mysteries; in which we cannot, with any shadow of Pretence, complain, that we have not a good Foundation for our Faith; no more being requir'd to be believ'd concerning them, but as much as is Reveal'd of them by God; nor any thing farther necessary to be known of them, but what is declar'd by him; nor otherwise than as he hath declar'd.

In this assurance we stand unmov'd against all vain Suggestions of the impossibility of there being any such Mysteries in the Christian Religion, and of our own incapacity to believe things which our Understanding cannot comprehend. Which assertions proceed from a bold, but mistaken Philosophy; ignorant of the great Power of God; and not rightly distinguishing between the measure of Knowledge, sufficient for Faith, and for Demonstration; nor knowing, that where the Veracity of the Affirmer, and the Power of the Author of any Miracle are unquestionable, there we have a good Authority to believe his Relation of anything, tho' it shall be wonderful, and far above our Capacity to comprehend.

Now what God hath affirm'd, we have this reason to believe; and as far as we are capable of apprehending the Truth of a Proposition in which any Mystery is revealed by him, so far the Mystery becomes a necessary object of our Faith; and we may be said to understand enough of it, to believe, even when we cannot comprehend the manner and way by which it was produc'd; which (when they are not Reveal'd) we say remain a Mystery still; and when they are Reveal'd, they are often so likewise, being above our Understanding, in as much as the Power that wrought, is infinitely superiour to all our Faculties of Reasoning.

For

For Example, In the Incarnation of Christ, because God hath declar'd this in the Gospel, it is therefore an Article of the Christian Faith; but because the Incomprehensible Union of the two Natures (of perfect God and perfect Man) is not shewn, and would have far surpass'd all our Knowledge, if it had been Reveal'd; it is therefore (as the Apostle saith) a *Great Mystery without all Controversie, God manifest in the Flesh*. Nevertheless we may say, that we have some Notion in our Minds of what we believe herein; for the Truth of this Proposition, *God took upon him the Nature of Man* (being there is no contradiction in the Terms) may be conceiv'd in our Minds. And since we can conceive the Truth of this Mystery, and have a full assurance likewise of the Truth of that, which the God of all Power and Truth hath declar'd, we may affirm, that we do understand what we believe in this great Article of our Faith, and that we have a sufficient measure of Knowledge for our Belief, and we may shew the Reasons why we do believe it.

It is, I know, impossible for the Eye of Natural Reason to look clearly and strongly into the Works and Councils of Almighty God; but this can be no Objection either against our apprehending the Truth of these Works and Councils so far as they shall be Revealed; nor can the weakness of our Understanding be any hindrance to our believing them, after they have been declar'd by God. For Example, It will not be deny'd, I suppose, that Almighty God hath Created this World out of Nothing; and we conceive what we mean, when we profess in our Creed, that we do believe it. But our Belief and Knowledge of this must depend upon the Authority of *Revelation*, and not upon the strength and powers of *Natural Reason*; for from this we can have no Idea in our Minds of this beautiful Frame, produc'd to be, and arising up from the Term of not Being; but we have from *that* an assurance of the Truth of it. We do in like manner agree in believing the

Omnipotence of our Creator; but what Notion can our narrow Understanding receive of the Majesty and splendour of his Presence?

Now, if these things do far exceed all the Limits and Powers of Natural Reason, more especially to doth the wonderful Mystery of our Redemption by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (the greatest Work by far of God's Power and Love to Mankind;) which in its full extent can never lye within the compass of Human Knowledge, nor ever become *naturally* the Object of it; being that, which *neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, nor could it ever have entered into the Heart of Man,* without a particular Revelation from God; From whence alone it is, that we come to know the truth of this Mystery, and to apprehend in some measure, what is meant by the words of a Proposition, wherein we profess our belief of a thing far above our Comprehension: and from whence we have, in like manner, the same Notion of all the most marvellous workings of God's Love for the completing our Redemption; which are, and will continue to be Mysteries, so long as our Understanding is *Finite*, and not commensurate to the Power of an *Almighty Being*, and *Infinite Spirit*, whose *Mercies*, as well as *Judgments*, are unsearchable, and his Mightiness to save, past finding out.

This may serve to shew in general, the insufficiency of many Cavils against several Articles of the Christian Faith, rais'd mostly by natural Men, who have the Pride to *think above what is written*. By one of which (measuring the whole Power of God by the Scale of his own Reason) it is affirm'd to be as *Absurd* to say, that God hath taken upon him the Nature of Man, as that a Circle should put on the nature of a Square. *Spinoz. Ep. 27. ad Oldemb.*

If this is a Jest of the Philosophers, 'tis very unbecoming the seriousness of the Subject; and all good Men will abhor his prophane Lightness in the main Article of our Redemption. But if it shall be said in earnest by him, 'tis a weak

weak proof of his Judgment to argue from the Comparison of a Square and Circle, whose Properties do lye within the compass of our Knowledge, to the Nature and Power of an Infinite Spirit, which we cannot comprehend: And to measure the extent of God's Power and Love to Mankind, by a similitude of things natural and circumscrib'd, is truly absurd.

This may be one Instance amongst many, of the weakness and pride of those Men who set up without God to know and measure his Power, assaying without Revelation to penetrate into the Connex of Divine Providence, and into the Mysteries of Man's Redemption, which even the Angels are desirous to look into, but cannot. And when thou chargest thy Angels with Folly, what have we, O God, to rely upon without thy assistance? How uncertain a Guide to eternal Happiness (purchased to Mankind by so many amazing Wonders of Infinite Love) is the single Clue of Natural Reason! in it self much depriv'd, and so generally divided amongst the Sons of Men, that it is not of the same strength in any two Persons living! And yet (how weak never it may be in some, and how unequal to ever it is in all) yet said, that we must trust to it for the knowledge of our Salvation, even before the Reveald Word of God.

For so it comes to pass (and that more than once) That the same thing were not only once, but oftentimes reveal'd in Holy Writ, he would not believe it, if it did coincide with his Reason, proceeding upon Natural Principles (his Reason, laying aside Revelation, goes upon no other.) Now granting to suppose, that his Reason ought to be the only Rule and supreme Judge to himself, these Matters about which he wavereth, yet the Understanding of all Men is not alike good: And therefore others who shall reason wrong, must believe falsely, and of consequence lose their eternal Happiness, if they go upon the same Principle, and have no other Guide of their Faith

to Salvation. For *Socinus's* Reason (that it should be right) can never be a Rule to all; because in those Persons unto whom it shall not appear so to be, and there are many of steeper & Minds and differing Judgments in Mankind, another Man's Judgment can have no Power over their Belief.

And how then can this Principle build us up in Unity of Faith and Spirit, and in the Bond of Peace, and make us all to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joy'd together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment, to which the Apostle doth passionately exhort us in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. We cannot be united in our Belief by that, about which we shall perpetually contend, and in which we do so far differ from each other. But we may reasonably suppose, that *St. Paul* had a greater Authority and better Grounds to prescribe Rules to our Faith than *Socinus*; and that in perswading all Christians to Unity, the Apostle knew that there was one General Principle in which they might all agree, a common Standard, which would regulate their Belief, and give Life to the diversity of their Judgments, by delivering the same thing to their Faith, notwithstanding the different Ways, and unequal Strength of Mankind in their Reasoning. And if this Rule shall be no other than the Reveal'd Word of God, we may surely, with more safety, rely upon it for what is necessary to be known of our Salvation, than upon *Socinus's* Reason, or upon our own.

For it is certainly more becoming the Truth of God, and more secure for Mankind, that their Belief (upon which depends their everlasting Happiness) should rather be founded upon a that which is stable, and for ever fix'd, than this most Holy Word is put upon the fragility of Humane Reason, which varies, and creates, and fluctuates with Age, in all parts of which Sabellion is likewise necessary. It is most befitting the Justice of God, and most equitable to Mankind, that their knowledge of Salvation should be deriv'd

from thence, wherein they all have a common Right and an equal Possession, as they all have (or ought to have) in the Scriptures; who are to be judg'd by them; tho' unequal to each other in the strength of their Reasoning, and differing much in the natural Endowments of their Mind. But Justice and Equity will plead for us, that this Knowledge shou'd rest in something wherein we are all alike Partakers, as we all are of the Reveald Word of God; and in something wherein no Man excels his Brethren, as no Man naturally doth in the Power of believing the Scriptures, nor (with Grace) in his Abilities of obeying God's Commands to lead an Holy Life, and to order his Conversation aright.

And this seems to be the distinguishing Character of the Salvation of God by Jesus Christ, as we may presume to infer from our blessed Saviour's passing by the Scribes and Pharisees, and Preaching his Gospel chiefly to the Poor and Unlearned; where, not acuteness in Arguing, and largeness of Knowledge, but Probity of Life, and Humility of Mind were the proper Vertues that fitted them of all Mankind to be the first and the readiest Receivers of the Salvation of God. And it is very remarkable that the Cross of Christ, which brought Redemption and Salvation to the Souls of these Men, prov'd immediately after to the Learned Greeks Foolishness; for they sought Wisdom, but these the Kingdom of God; their Philosophy taught them to admire the Belief of nothing which was not fetch'd from self-evident Principles, and from thence deduc'd into demonstration; and therefore no sooner did they hear St. Paul preach of the Resurrection of the Dead, but they (as some amongst us do) ~~mark'd out~~ ^{to Humane Reason} and the ^{to our} As to the Mysteries of our Holy Faith, they receiv'd them with Contempt, being harden'd by their Pride, against acknowledging any thing so sublime for their Understanding, or believing any thing which was not confirm'd with their fancied Schemes of Arguing; But as to the

But

against blind Obedience and implicit Faith. De-

Duties of our Religion which lay plain and obvious to the meanest Capacity; *These* were overlook'd by the high-minded Philosophers; their *Heads* were warm with *Disputation*, but not so their *Hearts* with *Charity*; they train'd and exercis'd their *Reason*, (as they proudly imagin'd) but it was at the expence of their *Humility*; and so together with the loss of the Gospel-Duties, they made Shipwreck of the Christian Faith, and spent their time in nothing else (as the Apostle saith) *but to tell and to hear some new thing*. Which brings me to my last particular, to shew,

III. That it is an Holy Life which will render us the most capable of receiving this Knowledge. For to him that ordereth his Conversation right, *shall be shewn the Salvation of God*.

But this may seem to raise the Objection still higher against us; inasmuch as that sprightly Sense and Faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ are not to be reconciled; To be a true Believer is to quit our Reason; to be *frankly* Religious is to be sunk deep in Melancholy, or prejudic'd by Education, or weaken'd with Age: 'Tis some way or other (they tell us) by impairing or prepossessing the Judgment, and therefore we declaim so much against the use of Reason, in our disquisitions of Religion.

It would be a most vain attempt to argue against the true use of Reason in any thing, but more especially absurd would it prove, to banish it from the Enquiries into the Christian Faith, whose Truths have been Vindicated from the gross Errors of Superstition and Idolatry, by asserting to Humane Reason, and the Holy Scriptures, their right use and free Liberty. Yet this is the unjust Charge of our Adversaries; taking their all-vantage from this Controversie to object it most unrighteously against the Divines of our Church, who have appeared upon all occasions the forwardest, and (I may say) the most successful Champions against blind Obedience and implicit Faith. But

But it may be granted, I suppose, to be so *moderately* to Knowledge in *general*, to endeavour to assign to Natural Reason its distinct Office, and to confine it to its own Natural Objects; and it would prove the greatest advancement to Human Learning in *particular*, to perform the same thing in its several Sciences. Now, in all *these*, it may be demonstrated, that tho' all things fall under our Understanding by the intermediate help of our Senses, yet that there are many things (tho' want of a fit Medium, or due distance) which cannot be rightly judged of, unless an appeal shall be made from our Senses unto our Reason. And the same Subordination that there is in our Senses to our Reason, may be said to be in our Reason to Revelation, where it is own'd. For as in the knowledge of things Natural, we cannot be satisfied and determin'd by the Information from Sense alone; but our Mind rests in a demonstration from our Reason, notwithstanding it may seem repugnant to our Senses; so in matters of Faith, being led to the knowledge of God's Word by our Reason, we appeal from its final Judgment to the higher authority of Revelation in all the Mysteries which that shall declare; and herein doth our Faith acquiesce, notwithstanding the Word of God shall propose to our Belief great Wonders, seemingly disagreeable to our Reason. Now in the one, we do not reject our Senses, tho' we are not determin'd by them in the last Reason, nor do we in the other reject our Reason; but we make use of each in gaining the Knowledge proper for them to communicate within their respective Spheres, and proceed from thence, in ascribing the several Objects to be judg'd and determin'd at their right Bar; the Objects of Science by Reason, and the Objects of Faith by Revelation, with submission to the Sentence which shall there be pronounced upon each.

And herein, if we may argue from the Judgments of Almighty God (which are unsearchable by Human Reason) to the Mysteries of our Redemption, that which *Shall*

faith.

faith of our Submission to the Justice of Divine Providence, may be fitly applied concerning the Resignation of our Reason to the Revelation of God. That thing (says "*Salvian*") is not therefore not just, which God hath "brought upon me, because I cannot penetrate into the "Method of its Equity; for as God is more than Man's "Reason; so that thing ought to be unto me more than "Reason, which I know proceeds from God. It is agreeable to God's Reason, tho' not to *Mine*; and because his Knowledge, and Wisdom, and Providence do infinitely surpass my Knowledge, and Wisdom, and Reason, I submit, because God hath done it, it is just; because God hath said it, it is true.

Now in all these Matters a sound Mind is certainly one of the greatest Blessings from Heaven; and never more needful than to pass a right Judgment upon things of this Moment. Nor can an Inquisitive Head be ever employ'd to better purpose, than in examining what the true Religion of the Gospel is, and what is reveal'd by God. For (as I have said) our Reason brings us to the knowledge of that which is Reveal'd; to which I may add, that a sound Mind is never at odds with true Religion; that is, a Mind possess'd with Humility and Innocence of Life, and a steadfast reliance upon the Word of God; which are the Mediums thro' which our Reason is to judge of all things Reveal'd by Him. Without these Qualifications, Fancy and Ostentation too often usurp the place of good Judgment and solid Reason; and not seldom doth it happen, that the most pregnant Parts, when accompanied with Prophaneness, and Pride, and Impiety, serve only to set the Owners of them so much the farther out of their way from serious Knowledge and Divine Truths.

For the understanding of these things doth not arise so much from high Speculations, as from Conscientious Practice, and receives Improvement from keeping the Commandments of God. And as to every Science, a particu-

lar Genius and aptitude are requir'd in the Learner, so there is to this, Piety, Humility, and Uncorruptness of Life always necessary; without which, *Knowledge puffeth up* (as the Apostles of Christ telleth us) *but will never edifie*; unless to our Faith we add *Ventue*, and then, (and after that) *Knowledge to Ventue*: And even still we must be adding to our Knowledge; adding unto it *Temperance, Patience, Goodliness, Brotherly Kindness and Charity*. For if these things be in you and abound, they will make you, that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things (he the Apostle saith) is blind, 2 Pet. 1. 5.

Indeed a full and clear perception of all the great Mysteries of our Redemption is never to be attain'd in this Life, being (as we may humbly presume) reserv'd to make up the greatest part of our Beatitude in Heaven, nor even in that Estate shall the knowledge of all Men be equal, but proportion'd to the Capacity of the Vessel; yet theirs we may reasonably believe will have the most degrees of Perfection, whom exalted Love and eminent Piety shall place in the highest Stations of Glory; and that the same Virtues will in the best manner prepare and enlarge our Souls in this Life, for the Reception of all Heavenly Wisdom.

For a Good Man Experiences, that a Life spent in Justice and Integrity, tends more to advancing his Knowledge of the *Just one that inhabits Eternity*, than Memory or Wit: He finds that Chastity, Temperance, and Purity in Heart do best dispose his Soul, to receive a most lively Impression of the God of all Holiness: Universal Charity will display upon our Minds the brightest Rays of Infinite Mercy: A constant, regular Worship in the House of God, and the Returns which are made by him unto our daily Prayers, will shew us truly God's Goodness: And Lastly, a Worthy Receiving of the Holy Communion will make us one with Christ, and Christ with us. This is to order our Conversation aright, and from this Station God hath promis'd to shew us his Salvation. C I

I will conclude with some Considerations upon what hath been said by way of Application.

1. If we are firmly secure of our true Knowledge of the Salvation of God, in the Faith of that Church which we do profess; Let us then keep this Faith in Purity of Heart, and true Holiness of Life, without which no Man shall ever see the Lord.

2. If any Man is doubtful, amidst the many Disputes which do at this time wound the Christian Religion, and break the Bond of Peace; If he is serious in his Enquiries after that Knowledge which is to lead him to Eternal Life, Let him then in the sincerity of his Heart make this Trial; and, from a good Life, begin his searches after the Knowledge of the Salvation of God. Let Piety, Humility, Integrity, and Charity, be the Foundation upon which he builds a true Faith; and let him firmly believe, and faithfully practice all that his Conscience shall tell him God hath assuredly revealed and commanded, with a Mind free from prejudice, and ready to receive greater Measures of Knowledge, as they shall be tender'd unto him from his Word. And for his Encouragement, he hath an instance in the Scripture of a good and holy Man, who came to the Knowledge of the Salvation of God this way. *Cornelius a devout Man, one that feared God with all his House, which gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to God always. His Prayers were heard, and his Alms had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord; and he was soon after this shewn the Salvation of God: From his sincere performance of that which he did know to be God's Will, he was led on successfully to the Knowledge of the Salvation of Jesus Christ, of which he was ignorant, from a Proselyte of the Gate, to be baptized into the Christian Faith. And of a truth God is no Respecter of Persons; but in every Nation, He that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.*

30 Wickedness of Life is the most fatal step to Infidelity, and sets us at the greatest distance from this Knowledge of the Salvation of God.

For Vice, as the Platonists observe, doth much cloud and weaken the Understanding, and shews its Mastery and Dominion over the Mind by the Captivity it hath brought it under. And without this Natural Incapacity (if I may so call that Inability which proceeds from the Corruption of Nature,) impure Minds are very improper Judges of true Holiness, and the wicked Liver insufficient for the Salvation of God; from the Knowledge of which he seems to be particularly excluded; God saying unto Him in the Psalm of my Text, *What hast thou to do to declare my Statutes? Or that thou should'st take my Covenant in thy Mouth? Whereas thou hatest Instruction, and castest my Words behind thee.*

The wicked Man hateth Instruction: Even He, that is often the much-boasted Master of right Reason, and only impartial Searcher after Truth; He that sets by himself as the best qualified for Knowledge, because he doubts and disputes every thing, treading servily in no Man's steps, generously freeing his Mind from prejudice, and raising his Understanding above all that have gone before him. But still the wicked Man *casteth the Words of God behind him*; the Words which God hath revealed to instruct him in His Faith, and to direct him in an Holy Life; *and he hateth Instruction, hating* (as the Psalter translates it) *to be reform'd.* For thou *givest thy mouth to Evil*, (saith God;) *when thou sawest a Thief then thou consentedst with him; and hast been Partaker with Adulterers:* And with these Qualifications, thou settest up for a Reviler of Christ Jesus, and a Director in Religion.

God forbid that this should be charg'd upon all Unbelievers! Many of which have Modesty, and many, I hope,

Vertue, whom God, I trust, in his Mercy will bring home to himself in his appointed time. But yet the Observation which *Grosius* makes upon the *Natural Man*, from the comparison of the Greek Philosophers; (most of which History delivers down as unclean and impure in their Lives,) we find too often verified: It being a most just Judgment of Almighty God, that the Despisers of his Word should *walk in the Lusts of their own Hearts*, and be given up to the *Vices*, as well as to the *Errors* of corrupt Nature; to shew them, how uncertain a Guide they have to their *Salvation*, which they experience to be so far deprav'd in their *Morals*.

And of all such, we may be bold to say (whoever they are that shall join Infidelity and a vicious Life together,) that *their Enquiries into Divine Truths are vain and absurd*. 'Tis no wonder to hear *them* strenuously opposing the Belief of a future State; for it is necessary that *they* either stifle the Thoughts of *that*, or else forsake the Enjoyment of their present Pleasures. And 'tis no matter how *they* wrest and pervert, or wholly deny the Written Word of God; which being *denied*, extinguishes the dread of Punishments to come; and being perverted, takes away the Eternity of their Torments. 'Tis no more than we may expect, to find them disputing against the Eternal Law of Good and Evil; For these are the Barriers fix'd against their Wickedness, which they wou'd fain have remov'd: And we may hear them (but with Horror) daily blaspheming the Divinity of Jesus Christ, God blessed for evermore; whom they shall find their Judge at the last Day, but never their Saviour. Prophaness and wilful Ignorance in these Men serve them for Pandars to their Lusts in this present Life, and without severe Repentance, they are the Pledges likewise of the Outer Darkness and Blasphemings, which shall be their Portion and Torments hereafter.

O that God in his Infinite Mercies, may forgive us these great Sins of Prophaness in Holy Things, and Impurity of Life join'd together! (Sins which we see too closely united, and

too much triumphant!) O that in his Goodness He may preserve the yet Innocent and Faithful in their Integrity, Faith, and Vertue! and open their Eyes to discover the Deceits, and to avoid the Lusts of these impious Wretches! And may that good and gracious God, whose Merits and Long Suffering are boundless, give unto themselves a timely Repentance, before he calls them to Judgment!

Lastly, As to our selves, my reverend Brethren, shall I call it our *Affliction*, or our *Flippings*, that we have these Persons our implacable Adversaries? It is to our unspeakable Grief, that there will always be such Men (and that this Age and Nation do too much abound with them) Enemies to the Religion of Christ, and to their own Souls: But it is I think to our *Edmunt*, that the *Christian Faith*, and our *Passion*, have one Common Adversary, and that the Revilers of the *Ministry* are likewise *Blasphemers* of Christ.

To make our Glory the greater, we will be sure (by the Blessing of Almighty God) to adorn our Profession with an unblameable and upright Conversation, the true ground-work of all our Knowledge in that Salvation, which we are to reach others, and to attain ourselves.

And herewith let us not be discourag'd! They boast much of the strength of their Reason; I wish it were sound and true, (for then there would be no Cause of difference;) but we, I trust, have *that* on our side; experienced from our Education, how to wield the Weapon; and, from our Knowledge in the Scriptures, where to let it fall in submission to Faith: To which let us add (what our Holy Function indispensably requires,) a good Life, and our faithful Labours in the Word of God; our best Security for our Knowledge in Jesus Christ.

Let these be our strong Hold, our Rock of Defence, and our Castle, in which we will trust! from which nothing shall ever make us to recede, or draw us out beyond our Lines: Not the *Vanity* of trying our Strength in New Schemes

Schemes of Divinity; not the *Hardiness* of rejecting the Receiv'd and Establish'd Terms of the Church of Christ; not the *Deceitfulness of Philosophy* to forsake the Word of God. And then with all assurance, we may appeal to the good and unprejudiced part of Mankind, which is the safest Guide to the Knowledge of the Salvation of God, *Reason with the Gospel, or Reason without it.* It is the Cause of God in which we are engaged, and the Redemption of all Faithful Christians through the Blood of Christ, for which we contend: *Let us therefore play the Men for our People, and for the Cities of our God!* But let God himself be the Director in the Methods of his own Salvation. *And the Lord do that which seemeth him good!*

And if this be *Priest-Craft*, may our Right Hand never forget her *Cunning*! May our Studies be serious, our Endeavours strong, and our Prudence and Charity always exercis'd in it! That by it we may catch Men, even them (if it shall be the good Pleasure of Heaven,) who use *their Craft* for the destruction of those Souls for which *Jesus Christ* died.

And now, O Lord, behold their *Threatnings* and *Revilings*! In thy Mercy renew a right Spirit within them! And grant unto thy Servants that with all *Baldness* they may speak thy Word in Truth and Soberness! That with *Constancy* they may teach that Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints! That they may stand up in defence of thy Holy Scriptures, not without much Blood, rescu'd out of the Hands of unreasonable Men by our Forefathers of the Reformation. And of thy Grace, add to these Mercies, Integrity of Life, and Purity of Manners in thy Servants which wait at thy Altar! So shall we be able, O Lord, by the Soundness of our Doctrine, and Holiness of our Lives, both to exhort and convince *Gain-sayers*, and to shew forth the Salvation of God.

I F I N I S.

END
DATE
OFF
NOV
EMUL
REEL
CAMERA